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‘Teach them well’



Olivier Douliery-Pool/Getty Images
President Barack Obama waits to speak at Sunday’s interfaith vigil at Newtown High School for Friday’s shooting victims at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Offering comfort: Obama comes to console Connecticut

By Ken Dixon and Neil Vigdor

NEWTOWN — The wounds still raw from 27 dead women and children — the worst grade-school shooting in U.S. history — President Barack Obama paid his respects Sunday night to the families who lost loved ones in the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre.

Then he put Congress on notice about toughening gun laws in the wake of the fourth mass shooting during his tenure.

“We can’t tolerate this anymore,” Obama said in the Newtown High School auditorium. “These tragedies must end. And to end them, we must change. Are we really prepared to say we’re powerless in the face of such carnage?”

See Obama on A5



A photo from the Emilie Parker Fund Facebook page shows President Barack Obama meeting with children before Sunday’s interfaith service at Newtown High School.

Solace interrupted: Newtown church gets bomb threat

By Michael P. Mayko

NEWTOWN — With the raw horror of Friday’s school massacre still haunting their minds, hundreds of residents sought solace and comfort at St. Rose of Lima Church on Sunday — only to be terrorized by a person calling in a phony bomb threat.

The call came just three days after Adam Lanza, 20, used a semi-automatic assault rifle to massacre 20 first-graders and the six staffers trying to protect them at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

And the threat came just hours before President Barack Obama met privately with first responders and victims’ families before an emotional vigil at Newtown High School.

See Newtown on A5



Brian A. Pounds/Staff photographer

Carmen Cohen, of Danbury, weeps as she is comforted by her niece, Jelsey Romero, 16, of Danbury, during a visit to the memorial for victims of Friday’s Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

Inside

» **Heroes and angels:** A “sweet boy.” A woman who will never get her Christmas Eve proposal. A big New York Giants fan. They are among the victims of Friday’s tragedy in Newtown. Here are their stories. **A2-3**

» **‘Pray for Newtown’:** A grieving community turns to faith to find comfort as it seeks answers. “God was there at Sandy Hook Elementary on Friday. God’s was the first heart broken,” the Rev. Matthew Crebbin said. **A3**

ESSAY

BY LIZA LONG, AN AUTHOR AND BLOGGER BASED IN IDAHO. HER ESSAY IS REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY’S ‘THE BLUE REVIEW,’ A JOURNAL OF POPULAR SCHOLARSHIP.

‘I am Adam Lanza’s mother’

Three days before 20-year-old Adam Lanza killed his mother, then opened fire on a classroom full of Newtown schoolchildren, my 13-year old son Michael (name changed) missed his bus because he was wearing the wrong color pants.

“I can wear these pants,” he said, his tone increasingly belligerent, the black-hole pupils of his eyes swallowing the blue irises.

“They are navy blue,” I told him.

“Your school’s dress code says black or khaki pants only.”

“They told me I could wear these,”

Looking for answers

» **Urging caution:** Experts warn against connecting mental illness with violence. **A4**

he insisted. “You’re a stupid b---h. I can wear whatever pants I want to. This is America. I have rights!”

“You can’t wear whatever pants you want to,” I said, my tone affable, reasonable. “And you definitely cannot call me a stupid b---h. You’re grounded from electronics for the

rest of the day. Now get in the car, and I will take you to school.”

I live with a son who is mentally ill. I love my son. But he terrifies me.

A few weeks ago, Michael pulled a knife and threatened to kill me and then himself after I asked him to return his overdue library books. His 7- and 9-year-old siblings knew the safety plan — they ran to the car and locked the doors before I even asked them to. I managed to get the knife from Michael, then methodically collected all the sharp objects in

See Mother on A4

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TRAGEDY IN NEWTOWN

Remembering angels and heroes

Words like “angels” and “heroes” echo through Newtown and beyond as people try to make sense of that which is senseless — the killing of 27 people — 20 of them young schoolchildren on Friday. Here are the stories of some of those who lost their lives. Profiles of nine of the victims were in Sunday’s newspaper. All the stories can be found on our website.

DANIEL BARDEN, 7

A ‘sweet boy’

Daniel was a little boy whose loves included the sports of football and soccer, as well as reading.

He was a “sweet boy,” Karin LaBanca, whose daughter was Daniel’s friend, told the Wall Street Journal.

One relative, who wished not to be identified, said Daniel was a member of the Newtown Torpedoes swim team.



She said there were a million “wonderful” things she could say about Daniel, but hesitated to without his parents’ permission.

The woman said Daniel’s parents were among those meeting President Barack Obama Sunday afternoon at Newtown High School.

“We just need a little time,” the woman said.

CHAROLETTE BACON, 6

‘Could light up the room’

They were supposed to be for the holidays, but finally on Friday, after hearing much begging, Charolette Bacon’s mother relented and let her wear the new pink dress and boots to school. It was the last outfit the outgoing redhead would ever pick out.

Charolette’s older brother, Guy, was also in the school but was not shot. Her parents, JoAnn and Joel, had lived in Newtown for four or five years. JoAnn’s brother John Hagen, of Nisswa, Minn., told Newsday.

“She was going to go some places in this world,” Hagen told the newspaper. “This little girl could light up the room for anyone.”

Charolette’s parents issued a statement on Sunday.

“Charolette was an extraordinarily gifted 6-year-old who filled her family each day with joy and love. The family will forever remember her beautiful smile, her energy for life and the unique way she expressed her individuality usually with the color pink.

Charolette never met an animal she didn’t love, and since the age of 2 wanted to be a veterinarian, they said. She also enjoyed practicing Tae Kwon Do weekly with



her dad and brother where she relished kicking and throwing punches.

“Charolette has left a place in her entire extended family’s hearts that will never be replaced,” her family said in the statement.

RACHEL D’AVINO, 29

A Christmas Eve proposal

Rachel Marie D’Avino was building the life she loved.

She had been an intern at Sandy Hook Elementary School for about three weeks.

With a bachelor’s degree from the University of Hartford and a master’s from Post University, she was progressing toward a doctorate from the University of St. Joseph in West Hartford.

She recently completed

requirements to become a board certified behavior analyst.

D’Avino’s specialty was behavioral therapy, helping children who were on the autism spectrum.

Her aunt, Christine Carmody, told Fox 13 television in Tampa Bay, Fla., that D’Avino’s boyfriend had recently asked her parents for her hand in marriage.

He planned to propose on Christmas Eve.



OLIVIA ENGEL, 6

‘Teacher’s pet’

The images of Olivia Engel will live far beyond her short lifetime. There she is, visiting with Santa Claus, or feasting on a slice of birthday cake. There’s the one of her swinging a pink baseball bat and another posing on a boat. In some, she models a pretty white dress, in others she makes a

silly face.

Dan Merton, a longtime friend of the girl’s family, said he could never forget the child, and he has much to say when he thinks of her.

“She loved attention,” he said. “She had perfect manners, perfect table manners. She was the teacher’s pet, the line leader.”



JOSEPHINE GAY, 7

‘Ray of sunshine’



Josephine’s celebrated her birthday on Dec. 11, just three days before the shooting.

Annette Sullivan, the owner of Zoar Ridge Stables in Sandy Hook, knew a number of the child victims from Friday; her farm was often used for birthday parties.

Sullivan described Josephine as a “ray of sunshine” who was “full of life, energy and enthusiasm.”

“We called her ‘Joey,’” Sullivan said.

Eileen FitzGerald, Nanci Hutson, Maggie Gordon, Paul Nelson, Alysia Santo, Keila Occasio-Torres, Frank MacEachern, Dan Tepfer and Erik Ofgang contributed to this report.



Michael Duffy/Staff photographer

A group hugs inside Walnut Hill Church after Mass in Bethel on Sunday. Counselors were available to help those grieving from the recent tragedy in Newtown.

DYLAN HOCKLEY, 6

Wanted a pet

Dylan and his family moved to Newtown two years ago from Hampshire, England, according to The Telegraph.

His mother, Nicole, was recently featured in a Newtown Bee article. Her husband, Ian, is British, and she lived there



with him for 18 years.

“The schools here have been amazing,” she said. “And the people in my neighborhood are incredible. Newtown is a wonderful place to live, and we’re looking forward to being here a long, long time.”

Dylan practiced martial arts and wanted a new pet.

“The kids keep bugging me for a dog, but I think we need to wait until they are a bit older,” his mom said in the interview.

MADELEINE HSU, 6

‘Upbeat and kind’

Madeleine Hsu was “Maddy” to those who knew her, Karen Dryer told The Wall Street Journal.

The little girl stood out in the colorful dresses she wore when riding to Sandy Hook Elementary School with Dryer’s son, Logan.

Dryer said that Madeleine’s mother ar-

ranged her work schedule to allow her to be home, at the end of the driveway in a red minivan, every day when her daughter got back from school.

Madeleine was “very upbeat and kind She was a sweet, beautiful little girl,” Dryer said.

CATHERINE HUBBARD, 6

A ‘beautiful daughter’

Catherine’s parents released a statement expressing gratitude to emergency responders and for the support of the community.



“We are greatly saddened by the loss of our beautiful daughter, Catherine Violet, and our thoughts and prayers are with the other families who have been affected by this tragedy,” Jennifer and Matthew Hubbard said. “We ask that you continue to pray for us and the other families who have experienced loss in this tragedy.”

NANCY LANZA, 52

A quiet woman

Nancy Lanza doted on her younger son, Adam. When she talked about him, it was obvious “he was her life,” said John Bergquist, a Newtown native who works at Dodgington Market and Deli and who last saw her when he sold her a Powerball ticket for the big November drawing.

Nancy Lanza was slain Friday at the home she shared with Adam in Newtown. It appears Adam Lanza killed his mother Friday morning with one of the firearms that she had collected for her hobby of target shooting. He then drove to Sandy Hook Elementary School, where he fired off scores of rounds that left 26 students, teachers and administrators dead before turning the weapon on himself.

Friends said Nancy Lanza was always optimistic that with the right love and attention

Adam could overcome the painful shyness and awkwardness that set him apart from other kids in Newtown.

Her older son, Ryan, was making a life for himself in the New York City area after attending Quinnipiac University.

Nancy Lanza was a quiet woman, neighbors said, a comfortable member of the community on Yogananda Street. She and her husband Peter divorced in 2009.

She grew up in Kingston, N.H. Her mom had been a school nurse. One of her brothers became a police captain.

After the horror of Friday’s massacre was revealed, her family issued a statement: “The family of Nancy Lanza share the grief of a community and a nation as we struggle to comprehend the tremendous loss that we all share.”

TRAGEDY IN NEWTOWN

‘WHEN EVIL HAPPENS, IT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY’

Community turns to faith for solace

By Nanci G. Hutson

NEWTOWN — On Sunday morning at Newtown Congregational Church on West Street, a block from the landmark flagpole, it was worship as usual — except it wasn't.

The sanctuary was standing room only. Some 350 to 400 parishioners and guests, including U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal and Sen.-elect Chris Murphy, filled pews on the main floor and in the balcony. More than 100 children watched as the Advent wreath was lighted around a table full of candles.

All present were eager, even desperate, to hear and recite prayer, sing familiar hymns, listen to Scripture and absorb words of solace

as this community strives to cope with the unthinkable — a massacre Friday morning of innocent children and the adults who taught them at the Sandy Hook Elementary School.

“God was there at Sandy Hook Elementary on Friday. God's was the first heart broken,” declared the Rev. Matthew Crebbin during an Advent sermon oriented to the tragedy just 11 days before Christmas. “God didn't will this evil to happen.”

The flocking to worship of all kinds was a pattern in Newtown — packed parking lots in all churches and an ecumenical prayer service at Edmond Town Hall on Main Street — and throughout the region and state.

Newtown Congregational parishioner Elizabeth An-

derson, 20, said she has never seen such crowds but assumes that people, like her, are seeking a “peace” in such a chaotic and confusing time. Anderson, who graduated from Newtown High in the same class as the shooter, Adam Lanza, said she has relied on her faith to “seek answers” to hard questions as well as to find forgiveness.

Through her faith, Anderson said, she knows “God didn't make this happen.”

Deacon Patricia Hubert, a friend of slain school psychologist Mary Sherlach, said the service emphasized what this community is all about: love.

“When evil happens, it takes your breath away,” Hubert said.

Staff reports

FAIRFIELD — The first funerals for victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings will be held Monday.

The funeral for Noah Pozner, 6, will be at 1 p.m., at the Abraham L. Green and Son Funeral Home, 88 Beach Road, Fairfield. Burial will follow at the B'nai Israel Cemetery, 472 Moose Hill Ave. in Monroe.

The funeral for Jack Pinto, 6, will also be Monday at 1 p.m., at the Honan Funeral Home, 58 Main St., Newtown. Burial will follow at the Newtown Village Cemetery, 22 Elm Dr., Newtown.

The funeral for 6-year-old Jessica Rekos will be Tuesday at noon at the St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church, 46 Church Hill Road, Newtown. Burial will follow at the St. Rose Cemetery, Cherry Street, near the corner of Black Cherry Lane. A wake will be private.

The funeral for Victoria Leigh Soto, a teacher at the school, is scheduled for Wednesday at 10 a.m. at Lordship Commu-

nity Church, 190 Prospect Drive, Stratford. Burial will follow at Union Cemetery in Stratford. Calling hours will be 3 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Adzima Funeral Home, 50 Paradise Green Place, Stratford.

The funeral for Daniel Barden, 7, will be at 10 a.m. Wednesday at St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church, 46 Church Hill Road, Newtown. Burial will follow at St. Rose Cemetery, on Cherry Street at the corner of Black Cherry Lane. Friends can call at the church, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday.

A Mass of Christian Burial for 6-year-old James R. Mattioli will be held at St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church in Newtown Tuesday at 10 a.m. with burial to follow at St. John's Cemetery in Darien. Friends can call at the Spadaccino and Leo P. Gallagher & Son Community Funeral Home in Monroe, Monday from 2 to 4 and 6 to 8 p.m.

Calling hours for Sandy Hook Elementary School Principal Dawn Hochsprung will be at the Munson-Lovetere Funeral Home, 2 School St., Woodbury, on Wednesday from 3 to 8 p.m. Burial will be private.

JAMES MATTIOLI, 6

‘A squeaky little voice’

James Mattioli was a “curious and wonderful” 6-year-old, said Annette Sullivan, the owner of Zoar Ridge Stables in Sandy Hook.

James would come to the stables with his sister, who would often ride at Zoar Ridge, and he always had lots of questions, Sullivan said. “He would ask about the saddles and the brushes. He wanted to know how to take care of the horses.”

“He was a boy that wanted to know how everything worked,” said Sullivan.

The adorable little boy was supposed to have been Marci Benitez's first appointment Saturday morning at Fun Kuts on Church Hill Road in Sandy Hook.

“He was so cute, had a little squeaky voice, and was always so happy,” said Benitez, who along with her husband, Felix, co-own the children's hair salon and consignment shop.

Marci Benitez recalled how 6-year-old James was always so polite and would constantly tell his mother how much he loved her.

“He was very talkative and acted older than his age,” Benitez said.



NOAH POZNER, 6

Loved his twin

Noah was “smart as a whip,” gentle but with a rambunctious streak, said his uncle, Alexis Haller, of Woodinville, Wash.

Noah's twin sister, Arielle, assigned to a different classroom, survived the shooting.

He called her his best friend, and with their 8-year-old sister,



Sophia, the siblings were inseparable.

“They were always playing together, they loved to do things together,” Haller said.

When his mother, a nurse, would tell him she loved him, he would answer, “Not as much as I love you, Mom.”

JESSICA REKOS, 6

Devoted big sister

Jessica was the daughter of a teacher, Krista Rekos who teaches sixth grade in Bridgeport. A photo of a brightly smiling Jessica, with her brother, lights up her mother's Facebook page.

Jessica was a devoted big sister to her two brothers, Travis and Shane.



One neighbor described her as “charming,” another as “adorable.” The first-grader had fair skin, brown hair, big eyes and cherub cheeks — a little girl who resembled both her mother and father.

“She was a sweet little girl, and I can't imagine,” said Michele Devany, who lives a few doors down from the Rekos family on a small side street of red front doors trimmed with wreaths.

“They're a very nice family, and I can't imagine what they're going through,” Devany said

AVIELLE RICHMAN, 6

‘Always wanted to hold hands’

Avielle Richman, a first-grader at Sandy Hook Elementary School, loved riding horses. Her trainer, Annette Sullivan, the owner of Zoar Ridge Stables in Sandy Hook, said she would “giggle when she trotted” and liked to wear her pink cowboy boots.

Sullivan said that 6-year-old Avielle wanted an Easy-Bake Oven for Christmas, “because she wanted to be able to make her



mom cookies.”

“Her smile could get her out of anything,” said Sullivan, and she was on the verge of losing her first tooth.

“She showed me her wiggly tooth, she was so excited,” said Sullivan.

“She was the most delightful little girl you ever met in your life,” said Sullivan.

Autumn Jones was Avielle's camp counselor at Zoar Ridge Stables this summer, and said she loved being around the horses.

“We'd make sure to put her on the small horse, because she was so tiny,” said Jones.

Jones said Avielle would often reach out to hold her hand as they walked from one part of the camp to another. “She always wanted to hold hands,” said Jones.

GRACE MCDONNELL, 7

Adored American girl dolls

The little girl was excited about testing out a new hairstyle that would make her look older and adored American girl dolls, said her hair stylist, Marci Benitez.

She said the blonde girl had recently started “letting her bangs grow in so she could have a big girl cut.”

“She was quiet, sweet and respectful,” added Benitez, who had been cutting the girl's hair for most of her life.

Grace and her older brother Jack “were like best friends.”

Whenever Jack came in for his cuts, Benitez said he would always make sure to take a lollipop for Grace, too. She had an appointment this week.

Neighbor Todd Werden described Grace as “a real cute little blonde girl with blue eyes — a real little doll,” according to The Washington Post.

The family said in a statement: “We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and support from so many people.



“Our daughter, Grace, was the love and light of our family. Words cannot adequately express our sense of loss.”

JACK PINTO, 6

Big New York Giants fan

Jack was a member of the Newtown Youth Wrestling Association; the team traveled to New York to compete in a previously scheduled event Sunday, and did so in honor of Jack.

He was a huge fan of the New York Giants, especially wide receiver Victor Cruz. On Sunday, Cruz wrote Jack's name on his cleats alongside “My Hero,” and also on his gloves, next to a message saying he was playing the game for Jack.

According to ESPN, Cruz talked to the family, offering condolences. He said Jack might be buried in a No. 80 Cruz jersey.



CAROLINE PREVIDI, 6

Nicknamed Boo



Caroline loved gymnastics, and went by the nickname “Boo” because of her resemblance to the girl character in the movie “Monsters, Inc.,” according to The Washington Post.

A Facebook memorial page for Caroline drew comments from strangers in other countries and friends in Sandy Hook.

Taylor Smith wrote that Caroline had shown her “what it was like to be a kid again,” and said one day they can “play soccer and hide-and-seek like we always did when I came over.”

The first-grader with brown hair, sparkling eyes and a big smile has been remembered by many on social media as a “little angel.”

BENJAMIN WHEELER, 6

Helped dad around the yard

Neighbors Peter and Jackie Bearce visited the Wheeler home Sunday to deliver their condolences, a batch of cookies and a bouquet of flowers but didn't see their neighbors, Francine and David.

The couple, whose house sits on a hill facing the Wheeler home, learned that little Benjamin was one of the victims on Saturday afternoon when they saw State Police vehicles in their neighbors' front yard.

Jackie Bearce said she saw Benjamin every morning as he waited for the bus with his mother, who was a founding member of the children's music group The Dream Jam Band.

The dark-haired boy would also follow his father around the yard as he performed chores, handing him tools or picking up sticks from the ground, Peter Bearce said.



Benjamin Wheeler, 6, bottom right, with his parents, Francine and David Wheeler, and brother, Nate.

ALLISON WYATT, 6

‘Nice and outgoing’

Allison Wyatt lived for only 6 years, but in that short time she had a big influence on those who knew her.

On Sunday neighbors mourned the loss of a “nice and outgoing young girl.”

The cars of a half-dozen mourners were parked in the driveway of the Wyatt family's home with a covered porch and a white picket fence.

An emotional next-door neighbor, Ana,

who asked that her last name not to be used, described Allison as a “very nice person.”

Allison liked to garden with her mother and was always outside in the summer, the neighbor said. “I'm so sad now,” Ana said.

Her daughter Jeydy, who is a few years older than Allison, used to play with Allison. Jeydy said her fallen friend with the shoulder-length brown hair “was kind, nice and outgoing.”

TRAGEDY IN NEWTOWN

‘SOMETHING HAPPENED TO SET THIS YOUNG MAN OFF’

Experts urge caution in linking shooter, mental illness

By Brian Lockhart

As the world wonders what demons caused 20-year-old Adam Lanza's killing spree, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy offered an explanation of his own Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." "This is mental illness ... dressed in evil."

But what kind of illness? And how did it factor into Lanza's decision to gun down his mother and 26 others Friday in Newtown before taking his own life?

Marc Brackett, who, as deputy director of the health, emotion and behavior laboratory at Yale University in New Haven, focuses on social and emotional skills of school students, teachers and parents, said those questions are impossible to answer.

"The public is speculating, and until there's a lot of research done on his history and any kind of psychological makeup, it's all

conjecture at this point," Brackett said. "The biggest thing for me is the earliest treatment possible for someone like this. Had there been signs, which there likely were, we need to act quickly. ... We can't (avoid) getting someone treatment — that this may pass. It doesn't pass."

Still, media outlets grasping to make sense of Lanza's actions for stunned audiences are piecing together a profile of a brainy but aimless loner who perhaps had been struggling with an autism-related developmental disorder.

Kim Newgass, outreach director for Wallingford-based Autism Services and Resources Connecticut, said it is frustrating to witness.

"I'm like, 'Oh great, here we go,'" Newgass said. "To even at this point be saying the word 'autism' is doing a disservice to everybody. ... One can be a loner

without having autism. One can be really bright and a loner without having autism."

Newgass' 23-year-old daughter has an autism disorder.

"There are so many kids who have been diagnosed in the school system with an autism spectrum disorder. If we start bandying about 'autism' along with this particular profile, I would hate to tar the community with that kind of brush," she said. "The vast majority of them are wonderful, loving, delightful human beings."

And, Newgass said, even if personal records surface for Lanza that mention autism, it is a complicated topic the media are likely to get wrong.

"We're all kind of holding our breath with what may come out and how it might come out in the press," she said. "He may have had some form of autism, but we need to look at the other issues,

not the autism."

Lanza is the latest in a line of young men across the nation and world with gunpowder and blood on their hands.

"In general, boys are socialized differently than girls," Brackett said. "From early on, boys are more inclined sometimes to play with more aggressive games and are reinforced by their families in terms of playing them."

Lanza's mother, Nancy Lanza, would take Adam and his older brother target shooting and legally purchased the three guns found near Adam's body: a semi-automatic Bushmaster rifle and Glock and Sig Sauer handguns.

Michael Brody, a psychiatrist with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, cannot understand why any parent or guardian aware their child is wrestling with a disorder would keep firearms available.

"Assault rifles? Handguns? What is that about?" he said.

Brody also said young adulthood presents its own unique pressures.

"Somebody in their early 20s has a lot to overcome and a lot to deal with," he said. "They have to start some type of career, some type of way of supporting themselves, choose somebody or be chosen by a partner in a more intimate type of relationship. It's a very stressful time."

Ultimately Brody expects investigators will uncover some inciting incident that sparked Lanza's rampage.

"The other thing that you usually see in a situation like this, there's usually a last straw," he said. "Something happened to set this young man off."

brian.lockhart@scni.com; 203-414-0712; <http://twitter.com/blockhart1>



Brian A. Pounds/Staff photographer

Christine Tunick, of Ridgefield, kisses her son Dillon, 3, during a visit to the Washington Avenue memorial for the victims.

Mother of mentally ill son calls for better health care

Continued from A1

the house into a single Tupperware container that now travels with me. Through it all, he continued to scream insults at me and threaten to kill or hurt me.

That conflict ended with three burly police officers and a paramedic wrestling my son onto a gurney for an expensive ambulance ride to the local emergency room. The mental hospital didn't have any beds that day, and Michael calmed down nicely in the ER, so they sent us home with a prescription for Zyprexa and a follow-up visit with a local pediatric psychiatrist.

We still don't know what's wrong with Michael. Autism spectrum, ADHD, Oppositional Defiant or Intermittent Explosive Disorder have all been tossed around at various meetings with probation officers and social workers and counselors and teachers and school administrators. He's been on a slew of anti-psychotic and mood altering pharmaceuticals, a Russian novel of behavioral plans.

At the start of seventh grade, Michael was accepted to an accelerated program for highly gifted math and science students. His IQ is off the charts. When he's in a good mood, he will gladly bend your ear on subjects ranging from Greek mythology to the differences between Einsteinian and Newtonian physics to Doctor Who. He's in a good mood most of the time. But when he's not, watch out. And it's impossible to predict what will set him off.

Several weeks into his new junior high school, Michael began exhibiting increasingly odd and threatening behaviors at school. We decided to transfer him



Brian A. Pounds/Staff photographer

Teddy bears bearing the names and ages of the 20 children killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School line the Washington Avenue memorial.

to the district's most restrictive behavioral program, a contained school environment where children who can't function in normal classrooms can access their right to free public babysitting from 7:30-1:50 Monday through Friday until they turn 18.

The morning of the pants incident, Michael continued to argue with me on the drive. He would occasionally apologize and seem remorseful. Right before we turned into his school parking lot, he said, "Look, Mom, I'm really sorry. Can I have video games back today?"

"No way," I told him. "You cannot act the way you acted this morning and think you can get your electronic privileges back that quickly."

His face turned cold, and his eyes were full of calculated rage. "Then I'm going to kill myself," he said. "I'm going to jump out of this car

right now and kill myself."

That was it. After the knife incident, I told him that if he ever said those words again, I would take him straight to the mental hospital, no ifs, ands, or buts. I did not respond, except to pull the car into the opposite lane, turning left instead of right.

"Where are you taking me?" he said, suddenly worried. "Where are we going?"

"You know where we are going," I replied. "No! You can't do that to me! You're sending me to hell! You're sending me straight to hell!"

I pulled up in front of the hospital, frantically waiving for one of the clinicians who happened to be standing outside. "Call the police," I said. "Hurry."

Michael was in a full-blown fit by then, screaming and hitting. I hugged him close so he couldn't escape

from the car. He bit me several times and repeatedly jabbed his elbows into my rib cage. I'm still stronger than he is, but I won't be for much longer.

The police came quickly and carried my son screaming and kicking into the bowels of the hospital. I started to shake, and tears filled my eyes as I filled out the paper work — "Were there any difficulties with... at what age did your child... were there any problems with... has your child ever experienced ... does your child have..."

At least we have health insurance now. I recently accepted a position with a local college, giving up my freelance career because when you have a kid like this, you need benefits. You'll do anything for benefits. No individual insurance plan will cover this kind of thing.

For days, my son insisted

that I was lying—that I made the whole thing up so that I could get rid of him. The first day, when I called to check up on him, he said, "I hate you. And I'm going to get my revenge as soon as I get out of here."

By day three, he was my calm, sweet boy again, all apologies and promises to get better. I've heard those promises for years. I don't believe them anymore.

On the intake form, under the question, "What are your expectations for treatment?" I wrote, "I need help."

And I do. This problem is too big for me to handle on my own. Sometimes there are no good options. So you just pray for grace and trust that in hindsight, it will all make sense.

I am sharing this story because I am Adam Lanza's mother. I am Dylan Klebold's and Eric Harris's mother. I am James Holmes's mother. I am Jared Loughner's mother. I am Seung-Hui Cho's mother. And these boys — and their mothers — need help. In the wake of another horrific national tragedy, it's easy to talk about guns. But it's time to talk about mental illness.

According to Mother Jones, since 1982, 61 mass murders involving firearms have occurred throughout the country. Of these, 43 of the killers were white males, and only one was a woman. Mother Jones focused on whether the killers obtained their guns legally (most did). But this highly visible sign of mental illness should lead us to consider how many people in the U.S. live in fear, like I do.

When I asked my son's social worker about my options, he said that the only thing I could do was to get Michael charged with a

crime. "If he's back in the system, they'll create a paper trail," he said. "That's the only way you're ever going to get anything done. No one will pay attention to you unless you've got charges."

I don't believe my son belongs in jail. The chaotic environment exacerbates Michael's sensitivity to sensory stimuli and doesn't deal with the underlying pathology. But it seems like the United States is using prison as the solution of choice for mentally ill people. According to Human Rights Watch, the number of mentally ill inmates in U.S. prisons quadrupled from 2000 to 2006, and it continues to rise—in fact, the rate of inmate mental illness is five times greater (56 percent) than in the non-incarcerated population.

With state-run treatment centers and hospitals shuttered, prison is now the last resort for the mentally ill — Rikers Island, the LA County Jail and Cook County Jail in Illinois housed the nation's largest treatment centers in 2011.

No one wants to send a 13-year old genius who loves Harry Potter and his snuggle animal collection to jail. But our society, with its stigma on mental illness and its broken health care system, does not provide us with other options. Then another tortured soul shoots up a fast food restaurant. A mall. A kindergarten classroom. And we wring our hands and say, "Something must be done."

I agree that something must be done. It's time for a meaningful, nationwide conversation about mental health. That's the only way our nation can ever truly heal.

God help me. God help Michael. God help us all.

TRAGEDY IN NEWTOWN

Obama comes to comfort stunned state

Continued from A1

Obama spent more than an hour with the families and local first responders at Newtown High. And then, the president shifted seamlessly from grief counselor to chief executive and back again.

In every way, Obama told them, the families of these victims were not alone at this interfaith service.

The room — and the world — was filled with heavy hearts over this senseless loss of life at Sandy Hook School. The shooter also killed his mother.

“We’re all parents and they’re all our children,” said Obama, who took the stage at 8:37 p.m. “This is our first task, caring for children. By that measure, can we truly say as a nation that we’re meeting that obligation? I’ve been reflecting on this the last few days and the answer is, no.”

As the president spoke each Sandy Hook School staffer’s name here, the sobs in the auditorium were audible.

It was even worse when he read the first names of all the little children.

“Oh, God,” murmured a man next to the media. His wife buried her face in her hands. A spasm hit the audience. Heads bobbed, shoulders shook. When he reached the last name, his audience was reaching to seat mates, touching them.

Bob Gibbons, whose wife teaches at Sandy Hook Elementary School and survived the shooting Friday, said he was glad the town had a chance to grieve and

get together.

“For everybody else in town, it’s been hard to connect with each other and this was good for the kids, it was good for the teachers, it was good for everybody,” Gibbons said.

Gibbons also said he appreciated Obama’s message of stricter gun laws: “I think it’s time. If this doesn’t get people making a change, I don’t know what will.”

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy introduced Obama, recounting that Friday’s shooting was the toughest in Obama’s presidency.

“Each time the day gets a little bit longer, I will think about the lives that might have been and the lives that were full of grace,” Malloy said.

Many of those in the school’s auditorium were young children who survived the shooting, including Peter Horan.

The 7-year-old was in music class when Adam Lanza barged into the school and unleashed a barrage of bullets that killed 20 children and six adults who worked at the school.

“He didn’t close his eyes,” said Tom Horan, Peter’s father. “He kept telling us about the bodies, and asking whether their bodies were going to be there Monday.”

Horan, an occupational therapist, was in Waterbury when he learned of the attack.

“If the gunman had gone down the other hallway, (Peter’s) would have been the first classroom,” he said.

The second-grader went to grief counseling sessions over the weekend and has



Jason Rearick/Staff photographer

President Barack Obama addresses the audience during an interfaith vigil at Newtown High School for the families and residents affected by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

been sleeping with his parents.

“He’s not the same,” his father said. “But at least we have him.”

Members of the state’s congressional delegation briefly met with Obama before the vigil. While waiting for the president to conclude his visits with the victims’ families, the group talked about a legislative response to the shooting.

U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., said a memorial resolution by Congress is only a start. There must be,

at a minimum, a new effort to restrict the ownership of high-capacity magazines.

“I think there is an infusion of energy, at least among the seven of us,” Himes said, referring to the state delegation.

“I think we’re at a turning point, a tipping point,” said U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who was the state attorney general and U.S. attorney in Connecticut before his election to the Senate in 2010.

A line of people a quarter-mile long waited in a cold

mist to go through metal detectors to get into the memorial service.

Many were turned away, as there were only 800 seats to accommodate the overflow crowd.

Those who stuck it out were given fleece blankets by volunteers from the American Red Cross, which presented many children with stuffed toy dogs.

Derek and Tricia Bobowick sat on the aisle of the auditorium with their son, D.J., 9, who was in music class at Sandy Hook Elementary School when the violence erupted.

“The longest car ride of my life,” Tricia Bobowick said of her frantic trip to be reunited with her son at the Sandy Hook firehouse.

The couple said they were still processing the tragedy — just like their son.

“He loved that school,” the boy’s mother said.

Amy Martin, 17, waited in line with her family for about two hours to get into the memorial service. The Newtown High School senior passed out decals printed with the words, “Sandy Hook 12-14-12,” and a child’s palm print.

Amy is selling the decals to help the victims of the shooting. Her next-door neighbor has a grandchild who lost 12 friends in the massacre.

“Obviously, because it’s such a small community, everyone knows everyone,” Amy said.

Newtown First Selectman Pat Llodra introduced the governor at the memorial service.

“Newtown is the place

that loves children,” said Llodra, who vowed that the community would overcome the tragedy. “It is the angry and desperate act of a confused man. I know that Newtown will prevail, that we will not fall to violence.”

Obama said Newtown showed bravery and resilience during its darkest hours.

The president spoke of the child who tried to reassure his teacher by saying he knew karate and he would lead the way to safety.

“This is how Newtown will be remembered,” Obama said. “With time and God’s grace, that love will see you through.”

An unexpected coda to the emotional night came long after the crowd left. A choir of 11 sang in the foyer of the high school for an audience of police officers gathered to debrief before going off duty.

The choir, called NAPS, was from Huntsville, Ala. They wanted to console.

“We drove all night,” said Ezrica Bennett, 21, who led the group.

They wanted to somehow comfort the families, who were out of reach. So they sang for cops.

They sang in a foreign tongue, an African song in the Tonga language, Bennett said.

The cops stood mute, then they all applauded. Bennett explained the song was one they sang on missions.

“It says we all have been called to do good works,” she said.

From staff and press pool reports

Tracy Kirk, of Southbury, lights candles in the shape of a heart outside the entrance to Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown on Sunday.



Brian A. Pounds/Staff photographer



A black Honda Civic is transported from the Sandy Hook Elementary School crime scene. The car appears to match a description of the vehicle Adam Lanza drove to the school on the day of the shooting.

Will Waldron/Hearst Newspapers

Newtown church service interrupted by bomb threat

Continued from A1

team and bomb squad armed with rifles and a shield entered St. Rose of Lima moments after its Monsignor interrupted the priest’s homily and told parishioners of the threat.

“After all we’ve been through, now this? This is unbelievable,” said one parishioner at St. Rose, where several funerals for the victims were set to take place this week.

Police quickly determined the threat was a hoax, but weren’t taking any chances.

“Everything is being taken seriously,” said State Police Lt. J. Paul Vance, after police searched the house of worship and an adjacent parish education center.

After an hour, Trumbull Police Officer Deborah Metz gave the all-clear sign.

But all religious activities for the rest of Sunday were canceled, according to Brian Wallace, a spokesman for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“I don’t think any of us are surprised by anything after what happened this week,” he said.

Vance said investigators are attempting to trace the call and collar whoever made it.

Hoping to stave off similar acts in the upcoming week of wakes, funerals and memorial services, U.S. Attorney David Fein made it clear that state and federal prosecutors are prepared to



Will Waldron/Hearst Newspapers

Armed State Police members file past a memorial to the victims of Sandy Hook Elementary School at Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Newtown. Police responded to a threat called in at the church, which was evacuated during services.

bring charges against anyone caught making threats at public gatherings, to victims’ families, the shooter’s family and witnesses.

“Harassment not only includes in-person contact but also contact via the Internet, social media and telephone,” Fein said.

Funerals for the first two of the 20 child victims will be take place in Fairfield and Newtown Monday afternoon.

Services for Noah Pozner, whose family moved to Newtown because they felt the schools were better and safer than those in New York City, will take place at 1 p.m. in the Abraham L. Green & Son Funeral Home, 88 Beach Road in Fairfield. Rabbi Saul Praver of Congregation Adath Israel in Newtown will officiate.

Survivors include Noah’s 6-year-old twin sister, Arielle, who was in a separate classroom at the Sandy Hook Elementary School and whom Noah called his best friend.

At the same time, services for Jack Pinto, 6, will take place at the Honan Funeral Home at 58 Main St. in Newtown.

St. Rose of Lima will be the site for the funeral for Jessica Rekos, 6, set for noon Tuesday.

Laura Soll, a spokeswoman for the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association, said contributions and offers of help have flowed in from across the country and around the world.

Pasquale Folino, who heads the association, said 100 volunteers from 55 funeral homes across the

state are helping prepare the bodies and provide transportation for families, as well as ushers for crowd and traffic control. Additionally, he said, several funeral suppliers in Connecticut have provided the caskets and burial vaults at no charge. Some florists have donated arrangements.

“We had an emergency board meeting Saturday where we put together a plan to offer whatever help the Honan Funeral Home will need,” Folino said. The funeral home is the only one in Newtown. “This is such a tragic situation that requires a real need to assist the families. Our hope is our help will make things easier.”

Autopsies of the 26 Sandy Hook victims were completed Sunday.

Chief Medical Examiner H. Wayne Carver finished the final two, those of Lanza and his 52-year-old mother, Nancy, and determined the woman had been shot four times in the head by her son. Lanza, 20, shot himself once in the head as he saw police approaching, potentially sparing the lives of dozens of other students and staffers.

Meanwhile, more details emerged about what transpired Friday morning.

Lanza, brandishing a .223 Bushmaster carbine, Glock and Sig Sauer handguns, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, blasted his way through the

school’s locked doors.

Almost immediately, he was confronted by Dawn Hochsprung, the principal, and Mary Sherlach, the school psychologist, as they rushed toward him. He mowed down both in a hail of gunfire.

He then stalked down a hallway past one locked classroom and into that of Lauren Rousseau, who was substituting for a teacher on maternity leave. He pulled the semi-automatic rifle to his eye and riddled the teacher and each of the 14 first-grade students as they cowered in fear, the website ctnow.com reported.

He went on to the next room, another first-grade class, taught by Stratford High School graduate Victoria Soto.

Soto, hearing the gunshots and the confrontation over the intercom, had hidden her children in closets and cabinets. She reportedly told Lanza they were elsewhere in the building.

But six students tried to run, and Lanza swung around and cut them down. He then sprayed Soto and another female adult in the room. Seconds later, he pulled a pistol and ended his life with a shot to the head.

All of the victims were shot three to 11 times, according to autopsies.

Vance said Lanza carried “multiple high-capacity magazines,” and hundreds of casings were found in

the two classrooms and the hallway. In addition, the state police spokesman said, hundred of additional bullets “had not been used.”

For now, Sandy Hook Elementary School, which Lanza once attended, will remain closed, and there will be a discussion about whether it will ever reopen again as a school.

In the near future, its surviving 505 kindergarten through fourth-grade students will be bused to Chalk Hill School in Monroe.

All of Newtown’s schools will remain closed Monday.

Students at schools across the state, such as Bridgeport, Bethel and Danbury, will see a police presence upon entering.

Also Sunday, more vigils were held across the state.

Nearly 300 people gathered in Bridgeport’s City Council room where they listened as Bishop Ricardo Griffith read each of the 26 school victims’ names as a candle was lit for each. They sang as Michael Cummings led them in hymns, and they recited prayers with the Rev. Charles Stallworth, the Rev. Reginald Norman and Rabbi Daniel Victor.

“Today we are leaning on each other,” Mayor Bill Finch said. “We are praying for these children ... we know are in heaven.”

Staff writers Tom Cleary and Dan Tefper and The Associated Press contributed to this report.